

6 November 1986

U.S.-IRAN HOSTAGE DEAL HITS A SNAG

BY NILES LATHEM

Washington Bureau Chief
SHADOWY negotiations between the U.S. and Iran appear to have failed to win the immediate freedom of more American hostages in Lebanon, diplomatic sources said yesterday.

U.S. officials said they had hoped the Lebanese Shiite Moslem terrorist group Hezbollah would free journalist Terry Anderson and educator Thomas Sutherland later this week.

Their release was expected as part of a deal that would involve easing the U.S. arms embargo against Iran.

White House chief of staff Donald Regan said yesterday:

"As time passes, I get less optimistic about the immediacy of the process.

"That doesn't mean we are not going to continue in many different channels to get these men out."

The deal apparently fell through when Iranian officials leaked news of the negotiations to the Syrian press.

In the last two months, the U.S. has been involved in intensive negotiations with Syria, Iran — a major influence with Hezbollah — and

other radical Arab nations to free the hostages.

The negotiations included a secret trip by former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane to Teheran.

CIA Director William Casey and UN Ambassador Vernon Walters also have been heavily involved in the negotiations.

The campaign to win the freedom of the remaining American hostages is being orchestrated by Lt. Col Oliver North of the National Security Council.

Sources said North was in Damascus and Cyprus last

week just days before the Sunday release of hostage David Jacobsen.

The proposed deal for the hostages' release involves U.S. relaxation of its six-year Iranian arms embargo.

Sources said McFarlane told Iran in September that the U.S. would look the other way while Iran buys spare parts for arms from other countries — including Israel and France.

In return, the hostages would be freed and the Ayatollah Khomeini would renounce terrorism.